

Speaking to the soul



Serving God

I bear on my body the scars that show I belong to Jesus. Galatians 6:17

Alan Paton wrote a book called Cry, the Beloved Country (Vintage) and was a fierce opponent of apartheid in South Africa. He once wrote about his death: “When I go up there, which is my intention, the Big Judge will say to me, Where are your wounds? and if I say I haven’t any, he will say, Was there nothing to fight for? I couldn’t face that question.” If we

are willing to stand up for truth and justice in this world, we will pay a price for it. That was certainly the apostle Paul's experience. He was thrilled with the new life that Christ had given him, but he had to pay a very high price.

When he wrote to the church in Corinth, Paul recounted the many occasions when he had suffered physically. He states: "I have...been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea" (2 Corinthians 11:23-25). There is no doubt that his scars revealed the depth of his commitment to Christ. When Paul wrote to the church in Rome, he spoke of himself as a slave of Christ, and he knew that slaves were normally branded. The mark of the owner was clearly placed on the body of the slave. Paul's scars were the clear signs that Christ was his master.

I don't believe that we should ever deliberately seek to suffer for Christ. However, I do believe that we shouldn't be surprised when serving him is tough. Perhaps the reason that we haven't suffered is because we have refused to stand up for the weak and vulnerable in our society. Perhaps it has been easy for us to serve Christ because we have ducked when more challenging roles have been offered to us. We all need to share Paul's sense of privilege that he was called to do demanding work for the Lord he loved.

QUESTION

How willing are you to do difficult work for Christ?

PRAYER

Lord God, I thank you for the privilege of serving you. Help me never to flinch when the going gets tough. Amen

Photograph - Beyond Ballintoy

